

REMARKS

Claims 1-4 and 15-19 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Rethmeier. However, it is clear that Rethmeier does not teach applicant's invention which is to space the edges of adjacent hangtags apart by a short distance and connect the spaced edges only by elements that are severable to separate the hangtags by a force applied substantially perpendicular to the hangtag ends.

Rethmeier teaches conventional hangtags connected edge to edge, with no space therebetween and no connecting elements extending between the spaced edges. Rethmeier's hangtags are defined by a line of perforations which include openings 21 and must be separated by applying a force directed at an angle to a line perpendicular to the perforation line, such that the separation begins at one end of the perforation line and gradually advances across the perforation line to the other end.

To highlight this important structural difference, claims 1 and 14 have been amended to require that each of the hangtags have an end comprising a substantially straight edge extending substantially between corners on opposite sides of the hangtag. Those claims also have been amended to require that the connecting elements space substantially the entire length of the hangtag edges a short distance apart.

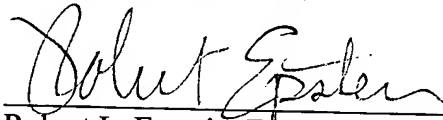
Rethmeier clearly does not teach connecting elements that space the entire length of the edges of the hangtags a short distance apart. In fact, Rethmeier teaches the exact opposite in that the edges of body of Rethmeier's hangtags are adjacent, not spaced from each other, except at openings 21. However, openings 21 in Rethmeier do not provide the function of applicant's structure, which permits the hangtags to be separated by a force applied perpendicular to the hangtag edges.

Accordingly, Rethmeier does not teach the limitations of the amended claims, does not teach the advantageous result achieved by the claimed structure and hence does not render applicant's claims unpatentable.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is therefore respectfully requested.

New claims 28 through 31 have been introduced. Those claims specify the number of connecting elements as being two (claims 28 and 30) and three (claims 29 and 31).

Respectfully submitted,



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